

Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq (The Splitting)

This Sūrah is Makki, and it has 25 verses and 1 section.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 25

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْشَقَّتْ ﴿١﴾ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ
 مُدَّتْ ﴿٣﴾ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ ﴿٤﴾ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ
 ﴿٥﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلْقِيهِ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَّا
 مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ﴿٧﴾ فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾
 وَيَنْقَلِبُ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿٩﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ
 ﴿١٠﴾ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوا ثُبُورًا ﴿١١﴾ وَيَصْلَى سَعِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي
 أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿١٣﴾ إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحُورَ ﴿١٤﴾ بَلَى إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ
 بَصِيرًا ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ﴿١٧﴾
 وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ ﴿١٨﴾ لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ ﴿١٩﴾ فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا
 يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ بَلِ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ
 بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ
 مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

When the sky will split apart, [1] and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to, [2] and when the earth will be stretched (to give room to more people), [3] and it will throw up whatever it contains, and will become empty, [4] and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to, (then man will see the consequences of his deeds.) [5] O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet Him. [6] So, as for him whose book (of deeds) will be given to him in his right hand, [7] he will be called to account in an easy manner, [8] and he will go back to his people joyfully. [9] As for the one whose book (of deeds) will be given to him from his back side, [10] he will pray for death, [11] and will enter the blazing fire. [12] He had been joyful among his people. [13] He thought he would never revert (to Allah). [14] Why not? Indeed his Lord was watchful over him. [15] So, I swear by the twilight (after sunset), [16] and by the night and what it envelops, [17] and by the moon when it develops at the full, [18] you shall certainly ascend from stage to stage. [19] So, what has happened to them that they do not believe, [20] and when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they do not offer *sajdah* (prostration)? [21] Rather, those who disbelieve deny (the truth). [22] And Allah is most aware of what they store. [23] So give him the 'good news' of a painful punishment, [24] but those who believed and did righteous deeds, for them there is a reward that will never be interrupted. [25]

Commentary

The present Sūrah depicts the conditions that will prevail on the Day of Judgement, such as reckoning and accountability, reward of good and torment of evil. The heedless man is asked to look into himself and his environs, which will lead him to believe in Allah and the Qur'ān. [The powerful opening of the Sūrah sketches some of the scenes of universal upheaval]. First, it speaks about the sky that will split apart. Then it goes on to speak about the earth that will be stretched and will throw up whatever it contains - whether natural treasures, or buried treasures, or dead human bodies, and then it will become empty. A new earth will be prepared for *Ḥashr* (Gathering of the Day of Requit). It will have neither caves nor mountains, neither buildings nor trees. It will be flat and smooth. It will be stretched so that there is ample room for the former as well as the latter generations to gather on the plain. This description

has been given in other Sūrahs with different styles, but in the present verses, there is an addition. About what Allah will demonstrate about the heaven and earth on the Day of Judgement, the following comment is made:

وَأَذْنُ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to,...84:5) The verb *adhinat* means 'it will listen'. Here listening includes obedience. The verb *huqqat* may be interpreted as 'It had an obligation to listen and obey Allah's command'.

Two Categories of Divine Commands

The obedience of the heaven and the earth, referred to here, may have two meanings, because the Divine commands are of two kinds: [1] the Divinely legislated [*tashrī'ī*] injunctions; and [2] the cosmic and destined [*takwīnī* and *taqdīrī*] commands. In the former case, the command appears as a law the violation of which is punishable. However, men are not practically coerced in the sense that they become practically unable to violate it. Instead, they have their free will to choose whether to abide by the law or to violate it. Such laws are imposed upon those who are endowed with intellect like humans and Jinn. This divides them into believers and non-believers, obedient and disobedient. In the former case, the commands are implemented by force. No one can deviate from them in the least. The entire universe, including humans and Jinn, follow them by force. The cosmic commands [which Allah has decreed] are applied forcefully and all the creatures, whether believers or unbelievers, pious or impious, have no choice or will but to do according to that command.

ذَرَّه ذَرَّه دَہر کا پابستہ تقدیر ہے
زندگی کے خواب کی جانی یہی تعبیر ہے

'Every particle in this world is bound by the Divine Decree.
Jāmī, this is the interpretation of the dream of life.'

It is possible that Allah will, on that day, endow the sky and the earth with special sense and perception like humans and Jinn. When they receive a command from Allah, they, of their own volition choose to act upon it. Alternatively, the command may refer to the second kind, that is, the cosmic command that no one can violate. But the words, وَأَذْنُ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ, "and will listen to [the command of] its Lord, and it ought to," are closer to the first meaning of command, while the second one is possible, if these

words are taken in their figurative sense.

وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ (and when the earth will be stretched [to give room to more people]...84:3) The word *madda* means 'to stretch, spread, expand out'. Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ؓ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that on the Day of Judgement the earth will be stretched out like leather (or rubber) and expanded into a smooth plain, and there will be just enough space on it for all individuals of human race to keep their feet. To understand this tradition, it is necessary to keep in mind that on the Day of Resurrection all individuals who will have been born from the inception of creation till resurrection will be brought back to life simultaneously. Thus each individual will have just enough space on the earth where he could place his feet. [Transmitted by Hākim with a good chain of authorities - Maḏharī].

وَالْقَتَّ مَافِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (and it will throw up whatever it contains, and will become empty...84:4) The earth will, with one convulsion, throw up whatever it contains in its belly, whether natural treasures or buried treasures, or mines, or dead human bodies and their remains and particles.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ (O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet Him...84:6) The word *kadh* means to 'exert one's efforts fully', and 'to your Lord' means 'to meet your Lord'. In other words, every effort of man would end at his Lord.

Return to Allah

Mankind is addressed in this verse and shown a road that if he were to think about it carefully, and use his sense and intelligence, he could exert his efforts in the right direction that will ensure for him welfare, well-being and safety in this world, as well as in the Hereafter. First, it has been pointed out that man, whether he is good or bad, believer or non-believer, has the natural tendency to exert himself in order to achieve his goal. A good-natured person will work hard and adopt lawful means to acquire his livelihood and necessities of life. A bad person cannot obtain his needs and objective without working hard. Thieves, robbers, rouses, cheats and looters apply their minds and exert their physical strength in order to achieve their objective. Secondly, it has been pointed

out that if the intelligent man were to think carefully, all his movements and pauses are stations of a long journey he is going through, though unconsciously. This journey will end at his presence before Allah, that is, at death. This is stated in the phrase *ilā rabbika* 'to your Lord'. This is a statement of reality which none can deny. All efforts, [good or bad], must end with death. The third point is that after death, in the presence of his Lord, he will have to give an account of his movements and deeds, and of his efforts. This is rationally necessary and justified, so that the consequences of good and bad may be separately known, because such distinction is not known in this life. A good person may work hard for a month or so in order to obtain his livelihood and necessities of life, but thieves and looters may obtain them overnight. If there is no time of reckoning or punishment, both of them [the good and the bad] will be equal, which is contrary to reason and justice. At the end, the verse says: *فَمُتِّبِهِ* (then you have to meet Him.) The translation given above is based on the assumption that the attached pronoun (*hī*) refers to Allah. The sense is that every person has to meet his Lord and to present himself before him to give the account of his deeds. Another possible interpretation is that the attached pronoun (*hī*) refers to '*kadḥ*' (working hard). Given this interpretation, the translation of the verse would be: "O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet it." And the sense would be: 'you have to meet the good or bad consequences of your working hard.'

The verses that follow depict separately the consequences of the good and the bad people, of the believers and the non-believers. First, the ledger of deeds must be received in the right or the left hand. Those who receive the ledgers in their right hands will be the inmates of Paradise with its eternal blessings. Those who receive the ledgers in their left hands will be the inmates of Hell. The point for careful consideration is that necessities of life, as well as unnecessary desires are fulfilled by both righteous and wicked people in this world, and thus both spend their lives in some way or the other, but the consequences of the two [for the Hereafter] are diametrically opposite to each other. One results in eternal and unending comfort, and the other results in eternal perdition, torture and torment. Man still has the chance [while he is living] to redirect his attention to working hard towards switching the situation in a direction

that not only fulfils his legitimate needs and desires in this world, but also attains the eternal pleasures of the Hereafter.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ﴿٧﴾ فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ وَتَنْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مُسْرُورًا ﴿٩﴾

(So, as for him whose book [of deeds] will be given to him in his right hand, he will be called to account in an easy manner, and he will go back to his people joyfully....7-9)

This verse describes the condition of the believers. Their books of deeds will be given to them in their right hands. An easy reckoning will be taken from them and the welcome news of Paradise will be given to them. They will return to their families joyfully.

It is reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī from Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

من حوسب يوم القيامة عذب

"He who is required to account for [or questioned about] his deeds will have to be punished."

At this Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها asked, "What is the meaning of the [following] verse ?" يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا (he will be called to account in an easy manner,...84:8). The Holy Prophet ﷺ explained that the verse signifies 'the deeds will merely be presented before Allah without being questioned. As for the person whose deeds are scrutinised, he will never be able to escape torment'.

This explanation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ clarifies that the deeds of the believers will also be presented before Allah, but by virtue of their faith, not all of their actions will be scrutinised. This is referred to as 'account in an easy manner'. The words 'he will go back to his people joyfully' may be interpreted in one of two ways. This may refer to the Houris who will be his family members in Paradise, or it may refer to his family members in the world who will be present in the Plain of Gathering, and he, after knowing about his success, will impart to them, according to the custom of this life, the welcome news of his achievement. The commentators have mentioned both possibilities in interpreting this sentence. [Qurṭubī].

كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مُسْرُورًا (He had been joyful among his people...84:13). This verse tells us that those who will be given their Record in their left hands

from behind their backs, they will desire death and destruction under the impression that this might end their misery. But it will not be possible for them to die. One of the reasons given here for his misery is that he used to live joyfully among his people in the world, and he was completely oblivious of the Hereafter. The believers, on the other hand, never for a moment were oblivious of the Hereafter in the life of this world. At every moment of pleasure and comfort, they were anxious and worried about the Hereafter. The Qur'an quotes the believers on another occasion as saying:

إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِي أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ

'Indeed we were afraid (of Allah's punishment) when we were amidst of our family, [At-Ṭūr 26]

In other words, they lived among their families and yet were fearful and conscious of the Hereafter. The consequences of the two groups will be appropriate to their respective positions. Those who led a life of luxury and pleasure in this world with their families oblivious of the Hereafter, their portion will be punishment of Hell in the next world. Those who were aware of reckoning and feared punishment in the next world will live with their families in eternal luxury, pleasure and happiness. This indicates that a believer should not be immersed in the comforts of this life. At no time and in no circumstance should he be oblivious to the reckoning of the Hereafter.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ وَالَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ. وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (So, I swear by the twilight [after sunset], and by the night and what it envelops, and by the moon when it develops at the full...84:16-18) In these verses Allah takes oath by four phenomena and reinforces what was asserted in :

إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ

'you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord'

If we consider the four phenomena by which oath is taken, it bears evidence to the subject which is forthcoming in the complement of the oath, that is, the condition of man never remains the same at all times. He undergoes changes and unexpected phases all the time. The first phenomenon that brings about a change in his life is the twilight after the sunset, or the red glow that remains on the west side of the sky after

the sunset in the evening. This is the beginning of the night. This is the harbinger of a massive change in human conditions, that is, the light is disappearing and a flood of darkness is setting in. The second phenomenon by which oath is taken is night itself which completes the change in his life. The third phenomenon by which oath is taken includes all things that night envelops or shrouds. The primitive sense of the word *wasāqa* means to 'pile, gather, heap up the thing'. If it is taken in general sense, it embraces every member of the entire universe which the darkness of night covers, such as animals, vegetation, minerals and inorganic matter, mountains and oceans. By extension, the word would comprehend all things that normally disperse in the light of day and retreat to their own places at night. Human beings return to their homes, animals to their habitats and birds to their nests. Business goods and merchandise are or piled up in one place. This massive change is related to man himself. The fourth phenomenon by which oath is taken is in the following verse: وَالْقَمَرَ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (and by the moon when it develops at the full...84:18). The word *ittisāq* is also derived from *wasāqa* and it means 'to gather'. The 'gathering of moon' signifies that it gathered its light, and it became complete and full [*badr*] the moon of the 14th night. The phrase إِذَا اتَّسَقَ *idhat-tasāqa* in relation to moon points to the phenomenon that it goes through various phases. First, it appears as a very fine semicircle. Then its light grows progressively night after night, until it becomes *badr kāmīl* [full moon of the 14th night]. Having taken oath by the vicissitudes of the four phenomena, the Sūrah asserts the subject: لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ (you shall certainly ascend from stage to stage....84:19) The word *ṭabaq* or *ṭabqah* refers to a 'stage'. Its plural is *ṭabaqāt*. The verb لَتَرْكَبُنَّ *latarkabunna* is derived from *rukūb* which means 'to mount or mount up'. The verse purports to say that mankind from the inception to the end of his life will continue to mount up stage by stage, or will pass through all the conditions, gradually and in stages referred to in the preceding verses, that is, periods of light and darkness and other phenomena. He never remains in one condition all the time. He gradually goes through the vicissitudes of life.

Vicissitudes of Human Life, His Eternal Journey and His Final Destination

In the first instance the male sperm is united with the female egg to

form a new human organism. This is turned into a blood-clot which transforms into a lump of flesh, and the lump is formed into bones, and the bones are clothed in flesh. The limbs of the human body thus were completed. Then the soul was breathed into him, and he became a living human being. His first food in the womb of his mother was the unclean blood of the mother's womb. Nine months later, Allah made his way easy to come into the world. Now instead of the unclean blood, he got the [pure] milk of his mother's [breast]. When he saw the wide atmosphere and air of the world, he began to grow and develop. Within the first two years of his life, he started moving and walking about, and was able to talk. He weaned and began to eat more delicious and different types of food. As he grew a little older, he made play and amusement his daily preoccupation. When his intelligence developed [sufficiently], he was tied up in educational and training activities. When he grew into a youth, he abandoned all previous activities and replaced them with youth activities and ushered himself in a new era where marriage, children and house-keeping became his day-to-day preoccupation. Eventually, this era too neared its end. His physical and other prowess began to give up, and every day he fell prey to new ailments. Old age set in. The final stage of this life, that is, death, began to mount. All this happens in full view of everyone. No one dare deny this. But the ignoramus assumes that death or grave is his final stage, and there is nothing beyond. Allah, the Creator of the universe, the Omniscient, made it known, through the various Prophets [through the ages], to the heedless man that grave is not the final stage of his life, but it is merely a waiting-room to enter an enormously large and gigantic world that is yet to come, where the final examination will be conducted and the final stage of his life will be determined. In this world, he will celebrate the Divine remembrance and enjoy eternal comfort and pleasure or he will suffer eternal perdition and damnation [depending on the final assessment]. This is where the vicissitudes of his life will end. Thus the Qur'an says:

إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ

'Surely, to your Lord is the return [96:8]'

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ

'and that to your Lord is the end (of every one), [42]'

إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا

'you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord [84:6]'

The ignoramus and unmindful man is made aware of the fact that the vicissitudes of life are stages in the journey to his final destination. Man ought to realise that walking, moving about, sleeping, waking, and standing and sitting are conditions, in the process of which he is covering the stages of his journey. Eventually, he will reach his Lord and, accounting for his life-long deeds, he will find his final abode that will be a place of never-ending comfort, luxury and pleasure, or [God forbid!] a place of never-ending retribution, torture and torment. A wise person should treat himself in this world as a traveller and prepare himself for the next world. His main goal in this life should be to cultivate for the next life as the Prophet ﷺ said:

كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ

"Be in this world as though you are a stranger or a wayfarer."

Under the phrase above *tabaqan* 'an *ṭabaq* 'from stage to stage', a similar narration is cited by Abū Nu'aim from Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ stated that these verses remind the unmindful of his creation, the vicissitudes of his life and instructs him to reconsider his position and the consequences [of his attitude in this life as there is still time] and to prepare for next life. However, despite these clear guidelines, there are people who never desist from their heedlessness. Therefore, the verse concludes:

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ، وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ

So, what has happened to them that they do not believe, and when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they do not offer *sajdah* [prostration]? (84:20-21)

It means that when the Qur'ān, replete with clear guidelines, is recited to them, they do not bow in submission.

The word *sajdah* / *sujūd* literally denotes 'to bow' and it connotes 'obedience'. Obviously, the word here is not used in its technical sense. It is used in the sense of bowing in submission with respect, humbleness and humility. The reason [for this interpretation] is quite clear. This verse does not command to prostrate at the time of recitation of a particular

verse. It is related to the entire Qur'ān. If the word *sajdah* had referred to the technical prostration, it would necessarily entail that prostration be offered at every verse of the entire Qur'ān, which by unanimous agreement of the Ummah is not the case. Neither *salaf* nor *khalaf* subscribe to this view. Now remains the question whether or not a *sajdah* is obligatory when this verse is recited. (There is a disagreement among the jurists on this point) By a long stretch of imagination, it is possible to use this verse in evidence or support of arguing in favour of prostration being obligatory on recitation of this verse, as some of the Ḥanafī jurists have done. According to them, the definite article al- 'the' in the word al-Qur'ān stands for the article that is used to indicate previous knowledge, and thus the word al-Qur'ān here refers to this particular verse under comment, not to the entire al-Qur'ān or the Holy Book. However, this interpretation is after all merely a possibility, but the clear context of the verse indicates that it seems to be far-fetched to take the verse in this sense. And Allah knows best! The true interpretation can be determined by prophetic narratives, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that of the noble Companions. The narratives pertaining to *sajdah* of *tilāwah* differ. Some indicate that it is an obligatory duty to make *sajdah* on this verse, and others indicate that it is not. As a result, there is a difference of opinion among jurists. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah holds the view that prostration at this verse is an obligatory duty as is obligatory at other verses of *mufaṣṣal*. Imām A'ẓam adduces the following Aḥādīth in favour of his opinion:

Bukhārī recorded from Abū Rāfi' ؓ that he prayed the 'Ishā' [Night] prayer behind Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, and the latter recited: إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْشَقَّتْ (When the sky will split apart) and at the relevant verse, he prostrated. So, Sayyidnā Abū Rāfi' ؓ asked him what type of prostration it was. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ replied: "I prostrated at this verse behind Abul Qāsim in a *ṣalāh*, and I will never cease prostrating during its recitation until I meet him on the Plain of Gathering." Muslim transmitted a narrative from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that they prostrated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ at relevant verses of this Sūrah, and of اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ

Qurṭubī reports from Ibn-ul-'Arabī that the veritable view is that this verse is one of the verses at which it is an obligatory duty to prostrate

when read or recited or heard being recited. However, the people among whom Ibn-ul-‘Arabī lived' it was not customary among them to prostrate at this verse. They probably followed an Imam, according to whom the prostration was not obligatory. As a result, Ibn-ul-‘Arabī says that whenever he led the congregational prayer, he would avoid reciting Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq, because in his view prostration at the relevant verse is obligatory. If he does not perform the prostration, he would be sinning. If he does perform the prostration, the entire congregation would regard it an unnecessary act. Therefore, he felt he should not unnecessarily split the community. And Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq
Ends here